MARVEL

THE ULTIMATES

CAMP | FRIGERI | BLEE

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To cave-kingdom Nidavellir they came, lightning-leaping world to world
Brace of God-Things, Celestial-Exiles
Divine Insurgents, "Big Ideas," primal forces--pre-urban legends, their existence outlawed by Universe's new regime
There was Thor, Thunder-Lord, Hammer-holder, lightning-tongued, head encompassing every storm.
And by his side, sharp-tipped Sif, sword-goddess, warden, war-woman, whose fleet feet forever failed to meet the floor

Nidavellir means fields below
Home of Dwarves and divine industry
Once a race of carefree craftsmen
All bosses, artisans, solitary self-starters
Now reworked into overworked factory workers.
Poor, pathetic paycheck-collectors,
Uneasy employees
Each with one job, forever
All assembled in a line.

Sticking to shadows
Sif spots **Brokk** and **Eitri**
Bickering Builder-Brothers, Mjolnir-makers, wonder-workers
And puts in a **special order:**
"Two cloaks to render movements mysterious, **invisible.** To hide comings and goings from even All-Seeing eyes."
Brokk and Eitri, longtime Loki-Loathers, agree
But not for free
They demand a fee
They say times are hard in stone
("this debt-concept is really heavy")
The price is steep but fair
So Sif and Thor go and snare
A bird made of Air
And a bear with flowing maiden's hair
And the night-sky constellation called "The Little Heir"
Plus, when all is said and done, Loki Lyesmith's head.
This time, we'll throw in his neck for free.
And if you say to me, "false, dismissed
No such things exist"
I'll reply
"Now you know WHY.
Because Thor and Sif resist."

The cloaks were crucial for **He** had spies, and eyes, of all color, shape and size.
The fox, the empty box, the infectious pox all tell-all to **Loki**, Unfair King of Asgard Supreme Commander of Skies Thin-Lipped Lord of Lies.
Formerly fast wit somewhat slower, mind's edge dulled Puppet-god, puppet-fraud, nowadays numbskulled
=Buurrppp!=
Every night gets drunk on dwarf-made poets-mead, easy-breathing epic into being Inventing flawless rhyme and meter on the fly Holding court Everyone cheering, terrified.
Too much of a bad thing, a tired bit In other words, full of his own [redacted].
At his right side Odin's severed head, stinking, saintly, speared. Shouting nonsense, portents, nightmare Preserved from germs with herbs and verbs
At his left dewy **Idunn**, youth-in-chains basket of overflowing immortal apples and something new, **broken** in baby-face

Looking down she saw
At foot of All-Father's throne
throng of **ancients--**
Unfavored Immortals,
Looking every day their age
Begging for another bite of life.
Some were enemies
Others allies
Loki's favor being fickle
Most cruel,
quixotic of the gods.

On scene, unseen,
Thor and Sif survey the field
Feeling angry, omni-impotent
Gods full of useless wrath,
"What's been done here is obscene!"
"How could we all just yield?"
Frost Giants everywhere
Ice-army occupying Asgard
The dead His dread policemen
On loan from daughter-Queen Hela
Who had plenty of people
Happy to help
In exchange her assistance bought
That haughty hall Valhalla.
A prize, for Hela,
long sought

It was the same story everywhere,
Especially here, the origin of stories,
Alfheim, land of Light Elves
Source of creativity, divine inspiration.
Long ago, they made the transition
From art to content
(Which are the same--
That's an official position)
Censors in place,
Backed by black-and-white bosses
Icy efficiency, small-souled purposes
Noted to death
A lot of uninspired perspiration
Like smokers' vessels, a narrowing
Of what is possible
To think,
To want,
To dream...

Next came **Vanaheim**
Fields of fertile lifelords
The Vanir, dirt forever under fingernails
Gods of harvest, hearth, birth
Thor and Sif came recruiting, constituting
gods' own guerrilla army
To lay low Loki Laufeyson,
And free nine worlds, one by one.
But the Vanir weren't so receptive:
"Not to say that Loki is right, not me--"
"No, of course not, but we--"
"He's mostly left us alone, you see--"
"It's not **our** fight--we're **free**"
"Not much has changed for us
Since the beginning of time.
We still plant the trees
And pollinate with bees
And sometimes we become the breeze"
"Plus, it's not just a rumor
a lot of us can see the future
Like a story passed down the other way
And we gotta tell ya, trust us:
it's better to obey."
Thor and Sif, united, slighted
call them names: short-sighted,
Unenlightened, fight-frightened
Sacred cowards, or worse, collaborators
Craven, uncultured cultivators
But it did no good
Convinced no one they should
Join the righteous cause
"It's safer to just follow the laws"

So the Vanir retreat, leave
back to leaves, loam,
gradual green grasses
Whizzing through wheat as wind
Expressed, once more, primarily,
through the fornication of fruit flies...
The formations of finches...
In figs ripening,
rising like welts...
As so often before
Thor and Sif are then alone
Instead of stony cell their surroundings,
It is endless, singing, stinging
Springing spring
Duty had driven them
Riven them
Given them everything,
For golden, gleaming Asgard
Never needed to be spoken
To be understood.
Stood beneath
That duty to a corrupted thing
Their hands running over
The sad curves of their faith
They worshipped each other
there, beneath the hanging bows of ash.
He kneeling before her like a temple
A supplicant
Making offerings
They united, intertwined
Like serpents,
Encircling the world.

When she wakes
Hours
Days
Centuries later
Sif, sated, seated,
For reasons unknown
finds herself alone,
the songs of cicadas
the lush murmur of
green things grown
her only company
Finally, Thor returns,
Covered in burns
One hand just cinders
Sulfur-stinking
Somehow shrinking
Unable to meet her eye.
"What have you done?"
She asks, not wanting an answer.
And god provides.
Then they're back to Old ways
Like always
Leaving important things unsaid
All business instead
They still had to make
Dread war on the dead

Some time after
For Loki, **disaster**
(it moves differently in myth--
Month, minute, millennium
They're all mixed up with
each other, blurred, whirred, wordsmithed
In name of pith)
Thor struck **Jotunheim**
The attack a surprise
His roar was "War!"
As he brought down the skies
Realm of Frost Giants
Loki's core constituency
With hammer and lightning felling
Acres, massacres on massive scale
Millions against one
But one **won**
And when deed was done
Left behind strange new mountain range
de-composed of corpses
Manifestation of Thunder's rage
Visible from Asgard
And these make
Andes look like anthills

But all this action
Was mere distraction
For while Loki returned
Back to fatherland, slaughterland
He left Asgard unguarded
As Loki dealt with distant tiff
In slipped Sif
mind decided on doom
To All-Father's throne room
Bringing brand-new
decorating concept tomb
Gods, giants, the dead
All fell before her knife
Save Idunn golden-head
Still fettered, bound to ground
Basket full of life
She came as breaker of chains
Agent of change
And took youth's innocence
To distant, dim-lit planes

In Niffleheim they hid
Place of primordial darkness
Poison oceans and private continents
Sky so thick with black clouds
Heimdall himself couldn't pierce the shroud
They sat by impossible fire
Fed by the dead
Tended and trimmed by Sif
Waiting for word to spread
They came to him
Few at first
And ancient, bedraggled
Those who'd never sworn
Worn their allegiance on their sleeves
Refused to bend knees
They ate Idunn's delicacy
restoring vigor
Not many in the confederacy
but a start, a flicker

Loki is raging
Rapidly Aging
Unused to time and losses
(the problem with most bosses)
He gathers his banners
His swords, hammers
Summons a rousing speech
But without his mead
Only stammers

Nevertheless, the message is received
They've been too lenient
Allowed themselves to be deceived
Made things too convenient
So they redouble oppression
Suppression, dispossession, aggression
Freedoms, once granted, are revoked
"It's all justified,
We've been provoked!"
Bad times get worse
The gods can hardly believe it
They spit, complain and curse
Too late, they see it

And in Niffleheim they gather
Those who can get free
The wronged, made strong
They finally see
You don't make concessions
To autocrats and their oppressions
You don't make deals
With tyrants
You make war!

But let's rejoin Thor
Before, post-embrace
Still smelling of Sif
Walking stiff
Through forests of fire
Over burning bridges
Sailing across seas
that mother suns
Who can say what drove him?
Desperation, inspiration, frustration?
Perhaps a vision
Either way, he'd made a decision
Better flames than chains
He fought fire demons
In caustic legions
the sons of Muspell
fell before the storm
Further and further
He'd come to make a deal
With Flame-Lord Surtur
Muspell's Fiery Crown
Who **approved** his appeal

Burn it all down.

Meanwhile, in the minor realm of Midgard
Home to mortals, Microwaves, and linear time
Starkson, Ironlad, invalid
world's most brilliant boy
hangs high above humanity
21st-century marionette
Held together by nothing but will and wires
Body broken beyond conventional fixing,
He rejects convention
Takes life's last chance at extension
Makes of his heart
A terrible engine
Revamped veins contain
Flow of blood and time
Lab-grown lungs
breathe in air, exhale era
Brain burns with revelation
Sudden sense of elevation
Infinity bares her breasts
Shows him everything
Means to make Lad into Man
"It's too much, it's too much!"
What was, what wasn't
and such,
Would drive any man into madness
Wants to scream, but doesn't
Instead shifts engine into low gear
Tells Infinity he's not ready
needs more time
She laughs at his bashfulness, his fear
Then dons her dress and disappears

But something sticks with him,
he's concerned.
Something he's been wondering about
trying to figure out
Since he returned
Something that was,
or **was** it?
He calls Doom
to his room
And demands it plain:
Explain.
SEVEN MONTHS
REMAINING...

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